



**VISN 8**  
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

# Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR VETERANS IN FLORIDA, SOUTH GEORGIA & THE CARIBBEAN

FALL 2011 | [WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV](http://WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV)

TAKE ONE HOME



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# To Our Readers

Welcome to our first issue of *Veterans Health Matters*. This quarterly magazine is focused on helping Veterans and their families in Florida, South Georgia and the Caribbean better manage their health and quality of life.



Fall is here and with it, the start of flu season. We take the threat of flu very seriously. Getting vaccinated protects you and your loved ones. If you are an enrolled Veteran at one of our VA Medical Centers in VISN 8, your flu shot is free. Learn more on page 3.

Likewise, getting screening tests and immunizations is one of the best ways to prevent certain kinds of illnesses and quitting tobacco may be the single most important thing you'll ever do for your health. VA can help (pg 6).

Finally, for Veterans who receive their care in Gainesville, Florida, a beautiful, new \$90 million addition is now part of the VA hospital there. This bed tower is the country's first VA facility with all private rooms for inpatient hospital stays.

We will continue to strive to provide the very best care to our nation's Veterans. Have a safe and healthy fall.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nevin M. Weaver".

Nevin M. Weaver, FACHE  
VISN 8 Network Director

**Veterans Health Matters** is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail or write to:

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VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, along with Rep. Corrine Brown, Rep. Ander Crenshaw, VA officials, and community leaders broke ground for the new Jacksonville, Florida VA Outpatient Clinic on August 10, 2011. The new \$35 million, 133,500 square foot clinic is slated to open in Fall 2012 with increased specialty services and state-of-the-art equipment.

# TACKLING the FLU

## What You Need to Know

The seasonal flu is a virus that attacks your nose, throat and lungs. It can make you sick for a week or more. It spreads quickly from person to person.

Luckily, it is fast, safe and easy to prevent the flu.

### Be aware

Learn the symptoms of the flu. They include fever, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, chest discomfort, coughing, runny or stuffy nose, and/or a sore throat.

Most cases of the flu do not normally require a visit to the doctor. If you have flu symptoms, you should:

- Stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours
- Drink plenty of fluid
- Rest
- Take a fever reducer, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen

### Stop the spread

The flu spreads quickly from person to person.

To slow the spread of the flu:

- Keep surfaces clean. This includes telephones, light switches, countertops, door knobs, keyboards, and TV remotes.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Use tissues. If you don't have a tissue, cover your face with your upper sleeve.

### Always wash your hands before:

- Eating, preparing or serving food
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Touching your face, mouth, or eyes

### And after:

- Using the bathroom
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Blowing your nose
- Coughing or sneezing



### Get Your FREE Flu Shot from VA

Getting a flu shot is the best way NOT to get the flu. The VA offers FREE flu shots to enrolled Veterans at all their facilities. Some facilities have drive-thru services and weekend hours. Check with your nearest VA medical center or clinic to find out exact locations and hours.

**PROTECT  
US ALL.**

**Get your  
FLU shot.**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

### You've ever had a bad reaction to a flu vaccine.

Side effects are rare, but can occur. "The most common side effect of the flu vaccine is a sore arm," said Bradley Bender, M.D., Chief of Staff at the North Florida/South George VA Healthcare System. Some people could also have cold-like symptoms. See your healthcare provider if side effects persist or are severe.

Talk to your doctor before you get a flu vaccine if:

- You are allergic to chicken eggs
- You've ever had a back reaction to a flu vaccine
- You are moderately or severely ill, with a fever!

For more information about the flu and flu vaccines, visit: [www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/)



# SCREENING smarts

Protect, detect, prevent – and learn your risks

Did you know it is important to keep up with your screening tests and immunizations? They can prevent certain kinds of illness, detect a disease at an early stage when it is easier to treat, and find out if you are at risk for getting an illness in the future.



“Every Veteran is different,” says Dr. David Massaro, Chief of Primary Care at Bay Pines VA Medical Center. “What you need may vary by your age, gender, health or family history.”

Talk with your health care team about the screenings and immunizations that you may need. All preventive services have benefits and risks. You may prefer to receive additional, fewer, or different services. Refer to the websites listed on this page to see which preventive services are recommended for you.

## What screening tests should I get?

- Most patients should be screened for alcohol abuse, depression, high blood pressure, HIV, military sexual trauma, obesity, PTSD, and tobacco use.
- VA recommends other screening tests based on age, gender, health status, and family history.

## Which immunizations I should get?

- Most Veterans should receive a flu shot every year and tetanus shot once every 10 years.
- VA recommends other immunizations based on age, gender, and health status.
- Talk with your health care team about other immunizations that are right for you.

*If you are a woman who is considering pregnancy, check with your health care team to make sure you are up-to-date with immunizations.*

## For More Information:

**VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**  
[www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov)

**Men Stay Healthy at Any Age**  
[www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm)

**Women Stay Healthy at Any Age**  
[www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm)

**Adult vaccination screening form**  
[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/Scheduler/AdultScheduler.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/Scheduler/AdultScheduler.htm)

**My Healthfinder**  
[www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/myHealthfinder.aspx](http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/myHealthfinder.aspx)

**Healthfinder Get Screened**  
[www.healthfinder.gov/prevention](http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention)  
 (Enter your information in the myhealthfinder box and click “Get Started”)

# Enjoy your STAY

A beautiful new bed tower makes hospital visits more comfortable

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*"The bed tower at the Malcom Randall VA in Gainesville, Florida is the nation's first VA facility to offer all private rooms for inpatient hospital stays."*

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Veterans who have a hospital stay in the new five-story addition to the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Florida will all have private rooms, private baths and space for their family members to be with them. The private rooms are among the many state-of-the-art features of the \$90 million, 226-bed tower that was completed in June 2011 and was dedicated on September 24, 2011 in a ceremony on the hospital campus.

"Throughout its history, this facility has expanded to meet the needs of our growing Veteran population," said North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Director Thomas Cappello. "What originally started as a VA Hospital in 1967 has grown into two medical centers and 11 outpatient clinics. Last year we cared for over 130,000 Veterans throughout our System and of those approximately 110,000 received some of their care at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center."

The bed tower, which has four floors of patient rooms, sits in front of the hospital's main entrance and has corridors that connect to the existing facility. The first floor houses specialty clinics including ophthalmology, urology and the ear/nose/throat clinic. A new laboratory area has a spacious waiting room and additional blood and specimen draw areas. There are also five large spinal cord injury rooms and an expanded emergency room.

Finding parking at Malcom Randall will also be easier for Veterans and their families when a 637-space garage opens this fall. Two additional garages are also being planned on the west side of the hospital campus.



## THINKING ABOUT QUITTING?

It may be the best thing you will ever do for you and your family's health. Help is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week at the "Quit Tobacco, Make Everyone Proud" website: [www.ucanquit2.org](http://www.ucanquit2.org).

Each VA facility has a tobacco/smoking cessation program that provides Veterans assistance with treatment, medication and counseling. To learn more about a program that might be right for you, contact the Health Behavior Coordinator at the VA facility where you receive care.

### Gainesville VA

Ann Landes | 352-376-1611 Ext. 4745

### Lake City VA

Beth Hammons | 386-755-3016

### VA Caribbean (San Juan)

Eduardo Martinez-Morales  
787-641-7582 Ext. 82011

### Bay Pines VA (St Petersburg)

Roma Palcan | 727-398-6661 Ext. 7849

### Miami VA

Jason Dahn | 305-575-3215

### West Palm Beach VA

Nicole Richardson  
561-422-5795 Ext. 5795

### Tampa VA

Elizabeth Jenkins  
813-972-2000 Ext. 4963

### Orlando VA

Deborah Tallungan  
407-629-1599

# A tobacco free LIFE!

You may know that smoking is bad for your health. But did you know how important it is for you to quit?

"Quitting tobacco is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health," says Brad Bowers, Physician Assistant-Certified (PA-C), Smoking Cessation Lead, Orlando VA Medical Center. "It also protects the health of your family members."



### What harm does tobacco use cause?

Tobacco use causes cancers, heart disease, stroke, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). If you are pregnant, tobacco can cause complications. It is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States. All forms of tobacco are harmful. This includes cigars, pipes, snuff, snus, chewing tobacco, and electronic or smokeless cigarettes.

### What are the benefits of quitting smoking?

- You will have more energy and breathe easier. Food smells and tastes better after you quit.
- You can save money that you can spend on other things.
- You will look and feel better. You will have fewer wrinkles, and no stains on your skin and nails.
- You will reduce the risk of your family becoming ill due to secondhand smoke.

**Most of all, you will feel good about protecting your health.**

### How do I get help with quitting tobacco?

Your VA health care team can help by:

- Recommending medications to help you quit
- Giving you tips for quitting, such as setting a quit date
- Support from an expert on your team, such as the Health Behavior Coordinator
- Classes with other Veterans who are also quitting

## Great American Smokeout

The American Cancer Society is marking the 36th Great American Smokeout on November 17, 2011 by encouraging smokers to use the date to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking that day. By doing so, smokers will be taking an important step towards a healthier life – one that can lead to reducing cancer risk. Quitting smoking is not easy for Veterans (or anyone!), but it can be done with some help from your friends at the VA.





*The MOVE! Team at your local VA facility is there to help you work towards a healthy weight, feel better and improve your health. Learn more about what MOVE! can do for you at [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov) or talk to your healthcare team.*

## Quick and easy for fall: Creamy squash soup

### Ingredients

- 1 small butternut squash, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 medium apples
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 2 cans (12 oz each) fat-free evaporated milk
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp ground black pepper

### Directions

1. Place the squash in a microwave-safe dish and cover with 1 inch of water. Cover the dish. Microwave for 5–10 minutes or until squash is very tender.
2. Puree the squash in a blender.
3. Peel the apples, then chop into thin strips or shred using a grater.
4. Warm the oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add most of the apple and stir until soft, about 5 minutes.
5. Stir in squash and pumpkin pie spice.
6. Stir in evaporated milk ½ cup at a time.
7. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir the soup until it is just about to boil.
8. Ladle soup into individual bowls. Sprinkle with a little pumpkin pie spice and the rest of the grated apple.



Serves 4. Serving size: 1½ cups soup. Per serving: 334 calories, 4 g total fat (1 g saturated fat), 7 mg cholesterol, 370 mg sodium, 5 g total fiber, 18 g protein, 62 g carbohydrates and 1,142 mg potassium.

Modified from a recipe in *Keep the Beat: Deliciously Healthy Dinners* from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. View the whole cookbook here: [http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.gov/healthyating/pdfs/Dinners\\_Cookbook\\_508-compliant.pdf](http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.gov/healthyating/pdfs/Dinners_Cookbook_508-compliant.pdf)



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## 2012 Calendar Now Available



VISN 8's 2012 Healthy Living Calendars are here! Pick up a copy at your next visit or ask your VA provider about getting one.

## VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

[www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)



at all  
Medical Centers

### Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

10000 Bay Pines Blvd.  
Bay Pines, FL 33744  
727-398-6661 \* 888-820-0230

### James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.  
Tampa, FL 33612  
813-972-2000 \* 888-811-0107

### Miami VA Healthcare System

1201 NW 16th Street  
Miami, FL 33215  
305-575-7000 \* 888-276-1785

### North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

#### Lake City VA Medical Center

619 South Marion Avenue  
Lake City, FL 32025  
386-755-3016 \* 800-308-8387

#### Malcom Randall VA Medical Center

1601 SW Archer Road  
Gainesville, FL 32608  
352-376-1611 \* 800-324-8387

### Orlando VA Medical Center

5201 Raymond Street  
Orlando, FL 32803  
407-629-1599 \* 800-922-7251



### VA Caribbean Healthcare System

10 Casia Street  
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921  
787-641-7582  
800-449-8729

### West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

7305 North Military Trail  
West Palm Beach, FL 33410  
561-442-8262  
800-972-8262